

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135
Westborough, MA 01581
(508) 792-7270 ext. 200

MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

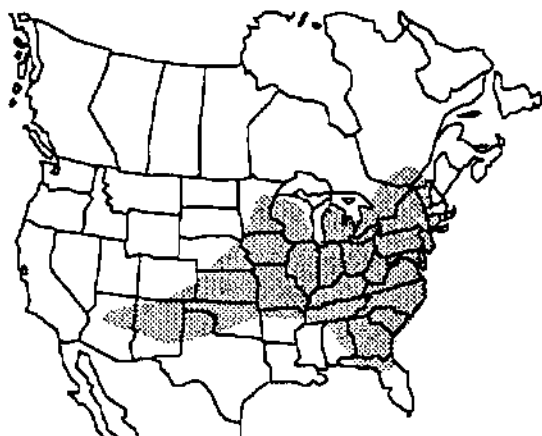
FALSE PENNYROYAL (*Trichostema brachiatum* (L.) BSP)

Description

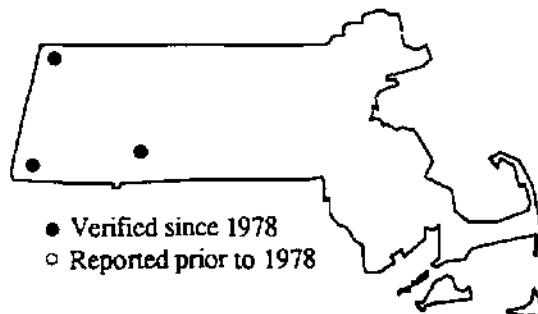
False pennyroyal is an erect, blue-flowered, herbaceous annual in the Mint family (Lamiaceae or Labiateae) that grows from 2 to 4 dm (1/2 to 1 3/4 ft.) high. The plant has minute, rather sticky hairs and many branches. False pennyroyal's elliptic to lanceolate leaves are short-stalked and acute (pointed at the tip). Its small, pale blue flowers are borne on stalks that rise from the leaf axils (points where the leaves meet the stem) and occur in clusters of 1 to 3 at each axil. In addition, these blossoms have five corolla lobes; a five-parted, bell-shaped calyx with nearly triangular lobes; and four stamens, which occur in pairs. False pennyroyal blooms in August. The 2.5 - 3 mm (about 0.1 in.) long nutlets (small, dry, one-seeded fruits) mature from mid August to late September. Some authorities classify false pennyroyal as *Isanthus brachiatus*.



Newcomb, Lawrence.
Newcomb's Wild-flower
Guide. Little, Brown and
Company. 1977.



Documented Range of
False Pennyroyal



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

Range

The documented range of false pennyroyal extends from southern Quebec, Ontario and Vermont to Minnesota and Nebraska, and south to Florida and Arizona.

Similar Species

Blue curls (*Trichostema dichotomum*) resembles false pennyroyal; however, the flowers of blue curls are terminal and have long, curling stamens that project out of the flower. The stamens of false pennyroyal either do not protrude or protrude only very slightly. American pennyroyal (*Hedeoma pulegioides*) also resembles false pennyroyal. Nevertheless, American pennyroyal has denser whorls of flowers, and its leaves are often toothed.

Habitat in Massachusetts

False pennyroyal is weed-like in its preference for open sunny exposures on dry, sandy soil, sandstone, or limestone. In other parts of its range it can be found along stream banks. Specific habitats in Massachusetts include a disused lime quarry, the fissures in an open slab of sandstone, a railroad bed with crushed stone and gravel, and limestone rocks in an open pasture. Among the plants associated with false pennyroyal at these sites are tall cinquefoil (*Potentilla arguta*), ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*) and white snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*). Rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with false pennyroyal include Tradescant's aster (*Aster tradescantii*).

Population Status

False pennyroyal is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts, where there are three current stations (discovered or relocated since 1978) and one historical station (unverified since 1978). (One town has both a current and an historical station and is represented by a single solid dot on the town distribution map.) False pennyroyal is also considered rare in New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, Michigan, Nebraska and Arizona. It was present historically in Vermont and Connecticut. Globally, the species appears to be secure. In Massachusetts, threats to false pennyroyal include habitat destruction and—in habitats where false pennyroyal may be shaded out—forest succession.